

There are Americans day in and day out, as we cast these debates and cast our votes, who back home are working to pay the taxes that finance this government, volunteering their time in civic activities to make their community better, and day in and day out do the work of this country.

I rise here today for just a moment to join many Americans who will next week in Washington, D.C. pay tribute to a great American, to a great Georgian, and to a personal friend of mine, Mr. Bradley Curry, a great businessman who built a company with his employees and his partners known as Rock-Tenn, a national, if not world leader, in packaging and in box board.

While he did that, he raised a wonderful family, committed his time to civic activities for the best of our community, whether helping to solve the problems of our public hospital, Grady Memorial, work in a voluntary think-tank called Research Atlanta, or join with hundreds of other Atlantans to make a dream come true to bring the Olympic Games, the Centennial Olympic Games, to our city in 1996.

Above all else, Brad Curry is a dedicated American. His partisanship is red, white, and blue. He works for the best of our country and business, the best in mankind in our community and, most importantly of all, for the continuing foundation of our freedom that we enjoy.

So for this moment on this floor, I rise to pay tribute to Bradley Curry, who will retire at the end of this year from the Rock-Tenn Corporation, but will not retire from his tireless efforts on behalf of his city, his State and his country. I ask all in this Congress to join me in paying their highest respects to Bradley Curry of Atlanta, Georgia, upon his retirement from the Rock-Tenn Corporation.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. EHLERS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. EHLERS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

RELIGIOUS BIGOTRY IN AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARMEY) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. ARMEY. Mr. Speaker, today America is at a crossroads. Our people head into the 21st century having witnessed remarkable events all across the globe. We have seen the rise and we have seen the fall of tyranny, Nazism and Communism, with Americans being instrumental in the destruction of both.

We have seen technological and scientific developments unparalleled in history. America itself is more prosperous than it has been at any time in

its existence. The United States is now recognized as the unchallenged superpower in the world.

Mr. Speaker, at the same time that our Nation has seen so many achievements, we must admit that there are some areas where we are not making the progress that we should. Today, Mr. Speaker, I regret to say that in one area where we are losing ground is our treatment of religious believers. We are witnessing a rising level of bigotry against people of faith, especially Christians.

Mr. Speaker, let me talk about some of the most recent examples that I have seen. The first three followed after the tragic shootings in Littleton, Colorado, and Fort Worth, Texas.

After the memorial service for the families and victims of Littleton, Colorado, on May 1, the May 1 issue of the Denver Post editorialized against what it called, "the disenfranchising nature of this memorial service."

According to the editorial page writers, "While the service deftly satisfied the needs of fundamentalist Christians, it estranged too many others who came in search of healing and due to the fact that the primary entertainment was by Christian singers Amy Grant and Michael W. Smith, and the key speech was by the Reverend Franklin Graham, son of Billy Graham, it drove away a sizable number of people who had come to mourn the deaths." The editorial went on to say, "We urge State officials to learn from the error and plan future events to be inclusive, not divisive."

In other words, Mr. Speaker, the editors of the Denver Post objected to the families and victims turning to their faith in this terrible time of grief.

According to the May 18 edition of the Washington Times, plans to create a memorial for the family and victims of the Columbine shootings at the Foothill Parks and Recreational District near the high school were scrapped after the Freedom From Religion Foundation threatened legal action. The spokesman for the group said that the memorial would make non-Christians feel unwelcome at that park.

The day after the tragic shootings in Fort Worth this month, the Washington Times reported that Attorney General Janet Reno was asked the next day whether she thought that these shootings had anything to do with hatred or religious bigotry. Attorney General Janet Reno warned reporters that it was too early to characterize the Fort Worth shooting as a hate crime.

This reticence was in stark contrast to other cases of bigotry. For instance, last year the Justice Department offered its resources to help prosecutors prove racial bias in another Texas case involving the dragging death of James Byrd within days of that tragic killing.

It has been 2 weeks since the shootings in Fort Worth, and we are still waiting for the Attorney General.

Mr. Speaker, there are still other examples. Whether we wish to admit it or not, Christians are now subject to ridicule, mistreatment and bigotry, pure and simple.

The television show "Nothing Sacred" lived up to its billing by trying to develop storylines with ministers of the cloth engaging in immoral activity or finding ways to belittle people of faith altogether. According to the New York Post which ran in March 1998, "Nothing Sacred" set an all-time low for viewership last year on a major network with 94 percent of the available market bypassing the program.

Hollywood is not any better. Movies such as this summer's release of Stigmata attack the Catholic Church, accusing it of being on a millennium-long crusade to stamp out the true teachings of Christ.

Mr. Speaker, there is more evidence that our society, rather than protecting religious freedom, is discouraging religious expression. According to the Associated Press, the ACLU sued the City of Republic, Missouri, on behalf of Jean Webb, a Wiccan witch, to have its city seal altered to remove the fish symbol.

The May 6 article stated that the ACLU planned to also argue that since the symbol is often found in Christian establishments, not non-Christian ones, and that most of the people who wrote letters supporting the fish symbol identified it as a Christian symbol, the ACLU had plenty of evidence that the city's support of keeping the fish symbol constituted an establishment of religion.

The Chicago Tribune reported that the ACLU this year sued the Chicago Public Schools because of its activities with the Boy Scouts of America. Why? The April 26 news story indicated that it was because the Boy Scout oath pledges that a good scout will obey God. By the ACLU's reasoning, such an oath, because it mentions God, makes the Boy Scouts a religious organization which should not be allowed on school property.

The USA Today ran a story last week announcing that the Augusta, Kansas, school board has revoked a policy that allowed students to lead classmates in prayer over the school intercom after the American Civil Liberties Union challenged the policy as unconstitutional.

On the May 21 broadcast of CNN's Crossfire, Barry Lynn, the executive director of Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, went so far as to criticize the acclaim given to Cassie Bernall, the young girl who was shot at Columbine High because she would not renounce her faith.

He said, I think that what we have done here is to take this one victim, turn it into an example of martyrdom, and then use it to become the springboard for even more exploitation of this tragedy by people with a religious political agenda.

Such insensitivity would have been denounced if he had said the same